



National Code of Practice & Professional Standards (2026)

This document has been updated to address the various innovations in martial arts training facilities, instructor qualifications, insurance compliance and confirmation of legal frameworks.

1. Industry Context and Purpose

The Australian martial arts industry operates within a diverse and evolving environment, ranging from part-time instructors delivering classes in community halls to large-scale commercial academies operating across multiple locations.

Despite these differences in scale and structure, all providers share a unified responsibility: to deliver martial arts services that are **safe, ethical, legally compliant, and professionally managed**.

This Code of Practice has been developed by Martial Arts Australia (MAA) to establish a **national benchmark standard** that reflects:

- The **traditional values of martial arts**, including discipline, respect, integrity, and self-development; and
- The **modern expectations of operating a regulated service-based business** under Australian law

This document is intentionally **principles-based**, allowing flexibility across business models while maintaining **consistent professional expectations across the industry**.

It is designed to:

- Protect **students and consumers**
- Support **instructors and operators**
- Align with **insurance and legal frameworks**
- Strengthen the **credibility of the martial arts industry nationally**

- **2. Scope and Application**

This Code applies to all individuals and organisations delivering martial arts-related services, including:

- Instructors and assistant instructors
- Club owners and operators
- Martial arts organisations and franchises
- Contractors delivering school or community programs

It covers activities such as:

- Structured classes and ongoing training programs
- Introductory and beginner programs
- School-based martial arts delivery
- Public demonstrations and community outreach

This Code does **not fully govern**:

- Professional fight promotions
- Large-scale tournaments

These activities require **separate regulatory and compliance frameworks**, although elements of this Code may still apply.

3. Core Operating Principles

All operators must align with the following foundational principles:

3.1 Duty of Care

Operators have both a **legal and ethical obligation** to take reasonable steps to prevent foreseeable harm.

This includes:

- Providing safe training environments
- Supervising participants appropriately
- Adjusting activities based on skill level and risk

Failure to meet duty of care obligations may expose operators to **legal liability, insurance issues, and reputational damage**.

3.2 Consumer Protection

Martial arts services fall under **Australian Consumer Law (ACL)**.

All services must be:

- Delivered with **due care and skill**
- **Fit for purpose**
- Provided in line with **representations made to consumers**

Misleading claims (e.g., guaranteed outcomes, exaggerated qualifications) may constitute **legal breaches**.

3.3 Risk Awareness and Management

Martial arts inherently involve **physical contact and controlled risk**.

Operators must actively:

- Identify potential hazards
- Assess risk levels
- Implement control measures

This includes risks related to:

- Sparring and contact training
- Equipment use
- Group density and supervision

4. Governance and Professional Conduct

Professional integrity must underpin all operations.

4.1 Legal Compliance

Operators must comply with:

- Australian Consumer Law (ACL)
- Privacy Act 1988
- State Fair Trading legislation
- Child protection laws

Non-compliance may result in **penalties, insurance denial, or business closure**.

4.2 Honest Representation

Operators must not:

- Misrepresent rank, lineage, or qualifications
- Use deceptive marketing practices
- Make unverifiable or misleading claims

Transparency builds **consumer trust and industry credibility**.

4.3 Conflict of Interest

Business decisions must prioritise:

- Student safety
- Ethical practice
- Industry reputation

Financial incentives must **never override safety considerations**.

5. Instructor Competency and Benchmark Standards

5.1 Minimum Competency Expectations

Lead instructors should demonstrate:

- A minimum of **5+ years of practical experience** to operate a club
- Recognised rank (Black Belt or Purple Belt BJJ) or equivalent competency
- Proven ability to manage classes safely
- Knows how to create and facilitate curriculums and class plans
- Can provide first aid
- Understands how to management a personal injury incident
- Understands the coverage of various business insurance policies
- Understands how to manage a building emergency
- Teach techniques, health, nutrition etc within their scope of expertise
- Saunas, ice bath and other wellness equipment requires the appropriate supervision and staff training for member safety

5.2 AMACS as the Industry Benchmark Course for Coaches

The **Australian Martial Arts Coaching System (AMACS)** is recognized as the **industry benchmark for instructor competency**.

Why AMACS is the Benchmark

Unlike traditional grading systems that focus primarily on technique, AMACS is built around:

- Coaching delivery and communication
- Risk management and injury prevention
- Class control and supervision
- Legal awareness and duty of care

This makes AMACS directly aligned with:

- Insurance expectations
- Legal compliance requirements
- Real-world operational demands

Equivalent systems must demonstrate **comparable competencies**, not just technical grading.

5.3 Ongoing Professional Development

Instructors must maintain relevance through:

- Continuous education
- Reviewing coaching methods
- Staying informed on legal and safety developments

6. Safety and Risk Management Framework

Safety is a **core operational requirement**, not an optional consideration.

6.1 Structured Class Delivery

All classes must be:

- Planned and structured
- Appropriate to participant skill levels
- Actively supervised

Unstructured or poorly controlled sessions significantly increase risk exposure.

6.2 Sparring and Contact Activities

Operators must ensure:

- Clearly defined rules
- Appropriate protective equipment
- Controlled intensity levels

Beginner participants must not be exposed to **uncontrolled contact environments**.

6.3 Overcrowding and Space Management

Training environments must:

- Maintain safe participant density
- Allow adequate movement space
- Avoid congestion

Overcrowding is a **major and often overlooked risk factor**.

6.4 Equipment Safety

All equipment must be:

- Regularly inspected
- Properly maintained
- Suitable for intended use

Faulty equipment may invalidate insurance coverage.

7. Hygiene, Health and Incident Management

7.1 Cleaning Standards

Operators must implement:

- Regular cleaning of mats and surfaces
- Hygiene protocols to reduce infection risk

7.2 Blood and Injury Protocols

Clear procedures must exist for:

- Managing bleeding injuries
- Immediate isolation and cleaning
- Safe disposal of contaminated materials

7.3 First Aid Requirements

At least one person present must hold:

- Current First Aid certification
- CPR certification

8. Participant Screening and Risk Control

Participants must be screened to ensure safe participation.

8.1 Health Screening

All participants must complete:

- Pre-training health questionnaires

Where risks are identified:

- Medical clearance may be required

8.2 Participation Suitability

Operators must:

- Modify training where necessary
- Exclude individuals where risk is excessive

9. Waivers and Legal Protection

Waivers are a critical risk management tool but must be used correctly.

Waivers must:

- Clearly outline inherent risks
- Be signed prior to participation
- Use legally appropriate wording

Key Legal Insight

Waivers may:

- Limit liability

But cannot:

- Exclude negligence - Poorly written waivers may be **unenforceable**.

10. Insurance and Risk Transfer

10.1 Minimum Required Cover

Operators must maintain:

- \$10mil Public Liability Insurance
- \$5mil Professional Indemnity (or Civil Liability) Insurance

10.2 Recommended Additional Cover

- Personal Accident (PA) insurance
- Equipment and property cover
- Management liability
- Cyber Insurance

10.3 Importance of Specialist Brokers

Using a **specialised martial arts insurance provider** ensures:

- Coverage aligns with real risks
- Reduced likelihood of exclusions
- Proper understanding of activities such as sparring

10.4 Personal Accident (PA) – Best Practice

PA insurance is strongly recommended because it:

- Supports injured students financially
- Reduces disputes
- Demonstrates professionalism

11. Child Safety and Inclusion

Operators working with minors must:

- Hold valid Working With Children Checks
- Maintain safe, respectful environments
- Enforce zero tolerance for abuse or harassment

Programs must be:

- Inclusive
- Non-discriminatory
- Respectful of diversity

12. Consumer Rights and Business Practices

12.1 Transparency

Operators must clearly disclose:

- Fees
- Terms and conditions
- Contract obligations

12.2 Refunds and Cancellations

Policies must comply with:

- Australian Consumer Law

“No refund” policies are generally **non-compliant and high risk**.

12.3 Cooling-Off Period

A **minimum 7-day cooling-off period** is recommended as best practice.

13. Documentation and Record Keeping

Operators must maintain:

- Waivers
- Health forms
- Incident reports
- Policy documents

Records must be:

- Securely stored
- Accessible if required
- Retained in line with legal obligations

14. Workplace Conduct and Behaviour

Operators must implement policies addressing:

- Discrimination
- Sexual harassment
- Bullying

All complaints must be:

- Taken seriously
- Documented
- Managed appropriately

15. State-Based Legal Considerations (Victoria Example)

Operators must comply with:

- Australian Consumer Law and Fair-Trading Act 2012 (VIC)
- Working with Children Act 2005 (VIC)

16. School Programs and Public Demonstrations

16.1 School Programs

Must include:

- Risk assessments
- Age-appropriate content and delivery
- Adequate supervision
- Appropriate safety equipment to be used

16.2 Public Demonstrations

Must ensure:

- Controlled environments
- Safe execution
- Separation from spectators
- Adequate training preparation for the demonstration
- Have staged rehearsals where they will demonstrate
- Liability insurance

17. MAA Industry Ecosystem

This Code is supported by:

- Martial Arts Australia – Peak Industry Body (governance)
- AMACS – Industry specific coaching coaches (coaching benchmark)
- Cert III – Diploma in Sports Coaching and/or Fitness (higher standard)
- MAA Insurance Services - Broker (risk and insurance)

Together, this creates:

- Standardised competency
- Reduced risk exposure
- Stronger industry credibility

18. Conclusion

This Code establishes a unified direction for the Australian martial arts industry:

- Professional
- Accountable
- Legally aligned

Adoption of this framework demonstrates:

- Commitment to safety
- Respect for consumers
- Readiness for long-term growth

The following documents can be access and created specifically for your business through our membership resources.

Appendix A: Sample Waiver Structure - [Participant Risk Acknowledgement and Waiver](#)

Appendix B: Incident Report Template - [Martial Arts Incident Report Form](#)

Appendix C: [Risk Assessment Checklist Martial Arts Class Risk Assessment](#)

Appendix D: [Instructor Competency Checklist Instructor Professional Standards Assessment](#)